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HOMEMAKERS' CHATS

Thursday, July 21, 1938

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Subject: "PLANS FOR NEW FARMHOUSES." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering. Publication available, Farmers' Bulletin 1738-F.

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We've talked a great deal lately about doing things to fix up old houses and stop depreciation, as well as to make them comfortable and convenient. So much has been said along this line that I have been taken to task for giving no attention to the folks who are thinking of building new homes. There are all the June brides and grooms, and many others who have outgrown present quarters, or who have been renting, or who, for other reasons are considering building.

So I sent for a copy of Farmers' Bulletin 1738-F, Farmhouse Plans, because I remembered that it gave about 40 designs for practical houses that can be built at a minimum of cost if the owner supervises the building, and perhaps helps with part of the construction. Anyone can get a copy by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture for it. While designed primarily for farm families, many of these plans can be used anywhere.

Families are likely to want different floor plans, different arrangement of the frontage, different exterior finish. Every sort of material is suggested in the bulletin, with some indications as to costs. The bulletin says: "These houses may be built of wood, stone, concrete, brick, tile, earth, steel or other materials, depending on the owner's preference, local availability and price, and the skill of the local builders in using one or another. Many new materials for roofing, flooring, and insulation are on the market."

I'll not try to describe actual houseplans. After you get your copy of the bulletin you can study them for yourself. When you have chosen one that meets your needs, you can get working drawings for it for a very small charge from your state agricultural college.

I'd like to mention, however, some of the special features you might note as you study various plans. Have you a pencil handy, to jot down those that appeal to you?

Naturally climate makes considerable difference in the plan chosen, and in the material of which the house is built. In the South, houses may spread out, all on one level; there may be no heating equipment except the fireplace. In the North, they must be more compactly built to heat economically, so two-story houses are used in many regions.

There are 15 plans in the first group of houses, which are called "growing houses". The idea is that the first unit can be erected at a moderate cost, yet the finished house may have all the features considered important. Additions are planned to fit into the original units with a minimum of ripping out and rearrangement. The exterior appearance will follow the lines of the original

house if the plans for the additions are made in advance.

Some of these "growing houses" start with just two rooms- a living-room, which is also used for sleeping, and a kitchen, used also for eating. When funds permit adding one or two bed-rooms and perhaps a bathroom, living becomes more comfortable, but a very small house will do for a pair of rural newly-weds, just as a small city apartment is satisfactory for a young couple living in town.

When the first unit is oblong, the extra rooms may be set across one end like the top of the letter T, or out in the back, making an "ell", or alongside the first part, making a square floor plan, or "jogged" on one of the sides in such a way that the connections between the new part and the old are well-placed.

Plan number 6516 in the bulletin starts as a large two-room rectangle, but eventually two additions are made, one on each side. In making these additions the architect says that the main kitchen equipment will have to be rearranged to keep traffic from the back door to the living-room from passing directly in front of the range. Possibly you would like to make a note of this point about plan 6516.

Here's a plan with several novel features- number 6518. A heater room on the main floor near the rear entrance and the kitchen avoids the need for a cellar. The kitchen is at one side and has 3 outside walls to give light and cross ventilation. The end of the living-room is narrowed to a dining-alcove. The back porch, as in many of the small houses, is used as a work-room on warm summer days.

In two similar plans, numbers 6520 and 6521, the original house has a temporary partition in what later becomes the living-room, making two bed-rooms. When the addition is built at the back or the side of the house, the partition is removed to make a large living-room. Both of these houses provide a convenient entry or wash-room at the back where men coming in from the fields or barns can hang their work-clothes and wash.

Some of the one-story houses can best be built complete at one time, as in the case of a delightful little log cabin which is as suitable against a wooded background on a farm as in a recreational setting. A total floor area of 25 by 35 feet is skillfully divided into living-room, kitchen, bath-room, and two bed-rooms. While intended to accommodate 4 persons comfortably, an extensible couch in the living-room would enable 2 more to live in the house. In many of the plans bed-rooms are purposely made quite small so as to have a better living-room. Small, compact kitchens are step savers as well as space savers.

One of the most ingenious houses is designed with all dimensions in multiples of 3-1/2 feet so that prefabricated materials of that width can be used if desired. When you receive your copy of Farmers' Bulletin 1738, be sure to note the interesting modernistic lines of this house, Number 6531, with its flat roof. Inside the arrangement includes a pass cupboard between kitchen and dining-room.

